Seattle Bicycle Advisory Board Comments on
University Area Transportation Study (UATS) Draft Final Report (dated January 2002)

In attempting to improve mobility for motor vehicles, the SPO's primary goal should be to NOT make anything worse for bicyclists and pedestrians. However, many of the items in the UATS draft report claim there is a "problem" for bicyclists where there is none, and then proceed to turn an "acceptable" situation into one that is inconvenient, dangerous, or both. We would like to see several of the key points in this plan redrawn to eliminate these flaws.

Eastlake Ave E/Campus Pkway, NE 40th (North end of University Bridge). [Refer to 1-b, 1-c, 1-g, Fig 8-9]

While the ideas of extending bike lanes north on Eastlake/University Bridge and redesigning Campus Parkway with bicycle lanes are good, most of the proposed changes in this area will significantly hurt bicyclists:

- Forces eastbound bicyclists to make left turn against traffic @ 40th (where now no cross traffic because 40th is one-way). One suggestion was to add a left turn pocket, but that would still be worse than the existing situation.
- Adds new intersection @ 7th up a short steep grade (between 40th below & above).
- Removes easy access between BGT & 40th (at 5-way stop at 7th). How do eastbound BGT users get on upper 40th to go south across University Bridge?
- Proposes short steep connector between lower 40th & BGT @ 9th that is too steep for grade separation and not enough space on BGT to accommodate intersection.
- Proposes short steep connector between lower 40th & BGT makes bikes turn left at/onto a crosswalk to get to BGT. Currently, there is no eastbound traffic, thus no conflict.

This item needs to be totally redesigned. In its current form, it makes a poor situation much worse.

Montlake Blvd NE/NE Pacific Corridor [ref 2-a, 2-b, 2e, 2-h, 2-l, 7-c, figure 8-10]

- Report claims there is "lack of easy connection from the BGT to the Montlake Bridge", which is not true, and then proceeds to make this "connection" significantly more difficult, time-consuming, and dangerous for bicyclists. The existing connection is: east crosswalk at Rainier Vista, bike/ped path curving down to sidewalk along Montlake Blvd, crosswalk to east side of Montlake Blvd, sidewalk along Montlake Blvd across Montlake Bridge, Hamlin, Park Drive, etc. Perhaps some complaints stem from the fact that the pedestrian signal button at the crosswalk was not operating for quite some time (it was just fixed last year).

- The only improvements that need to be made here are: 1) widen and remove traffic island obstacles at crosswalk across Montlake Blvd at NE Pacific, to reduce conflicts between bikes & peds at this busy crossing; 2) relocate utility pole from sidewalk along west side of Montlake; 3) add a few signs directing bicyclists along the existing route.
- The proposed connector between BGT and Montlake Blvd at NE Pacific Place has too steep a grade separation for bicycles (currently there are STAIRS there). The proposed connector also joins the BGT on a curve, which is usually in the shade. Limited sight distance and visibility would increase ped/bike and bike/bike conflicts on this already heavily traveled section of BGT.
- Moving the bike crossing to Montlake Blvd and NE Pacific Place forces bicyclists to either enter into the northbound roadway to turn left onto Pacific Place or wait through two traffic cycles to get across the street (Montlake Blvd).

This proposal is totally unworkable or unusable. This is just a BAD IDEA.

Proposed changes to BGT crossing at 30th NE and NE Blakely [6-e, fig 8-17]

- This claims to be "safety improvements" but could well make this intersection MUCH worse.
- Proposed new intersection location is not level. How can you have an intersection on a grade? What about sight distance, visibility, ADA accommodation?
- In order to create a safe crossing for bicyclists, southbound traffic on 30th/Blakely must not be allowed to turn right on red (their red light is when bikes are crossing). This is exactly the circumstance that causes so many conflicts with bikes and right-turning cars at BGT crossing 25th!
- Stop line for southbound traffic on 30th/Blakely should also be moved back (north) to allow for very wide crosswalk (at least 15 feet).
- Need to add loop detectors and bike/ped accessible signal controls to intersection. Bikes will run the red light if they have to wait too long at this intersection. Priority should be given to bikes when they get there. Currently bikes need only stop, and then they can proceed across crosswalk. Increasing the delays here will mean more jaywalking by bikes & peds.

Missing and/or incomplete data:

- Describes pedestrian use (mode split), but not bicycles. What % of UW students, staff, and faculty arrive by bike?
- Bicycle volumes at intersections (fig 5-2) are obviously undercounted, and non-existent for most major crossings—especially those with proposed changes. There should be accurate bike counts at every BGT crossing, and other major roads used by bicyclists.

- There are many pages of forecasts for auto and transit use, but none on bikes, or pedestrians. Since pedestrians already comprise a significant percentage of the mode split, and we would like to see bicycle use increase, we would expect that their forecasts would be included as well.
- Diagrams and discussion of changes to north end of University Bridge omit any references to intersection of NE 40th and 7th NE. Suggested changes have major impact on this intersection, and vice versa.

Proposed changes to SR520 at Montlake Blvd [2-i, 2-j, 2-m, figure 8-11]

- How do bikes get to-from the westbound flyer stop? Figure does not show access to-from flyer stop for bicyclists using Montlake Bridge.
- Where is ADA access to eastbound flyer stop? Wheelchair users have no access now, and bicyclists must carry bikes up/down 2 flights stairs.

Changes to 45th & 50th NE

- Report states "bicycle delays" crossing I-5 along these two streets but no proposed improvement. Proposed Ped/bike overpass at 47th [5-b, figure 8-14] is unlikely to be built anytime soon and will not address needs of bicyclists on 45th or 50th.

Changes to 25th NE and NE 65th [ref 3-a, figure 8-12]

- Proposed left turn only lanes add pinch points for bicyclists at midblock and drop bicycle lanes approaching intersection. This will increase conflicts between cars and bikes. Need to redesign so there will still be wide enough lanes to accommodate bikes and cars as approach (and leave) these intersections.

Proposed bike lanes need to meet AASHTO guidelines

- Bike lanes should be at least 6 feet wide in order to be usable in most places. Painting 2- or 3-foot bike lanes often create more problems because drivers think bicyclists should be "in the bike lane", when there is not enough room for a rider to stay there safely.
- Use common sense and move centerlines or repaint to create wider travel lanes or bike lanes only on the uphill direction of a street (as proposed in 4-a).

Proposed bike/ped trail between BGT and University Village at NE 47th [6-a, fig 8-15]

- Good idea.
- Make sure intersection point at BGT is enlarged to handle conflicts and increased traffic at intersection.

- Make sure east access onto trail from bicyclists using roadway into/out of University Village. Don't force bicyclists onto sidewalk between 24th & 25th.

Changes in vicinity of Ravenna Blvd and NE 55th [6-c, fig 8-16]

- Good idea here; especially changes that guide/force motorists to NE 55th instead of Ravenna Pl/NE Blakely to access NE 25th. If motorists were not allowed to turn right from Blakely to NE 25th, this would significantly reduce the conflicts with bikes & peds.
- Why not just make Ravenna Pl NE a one-way street North between NE 53rd and NE 55th? Local traffic could still use Ravenna Ave NE to get to NE 53rd and Ravenna Pl NE; other traffic would stay on 55th all the way to 25th. A win for neighbors and bikes.
- Don't make sidewalk bulges too big on westbound NE 55th and northbound NE Ravenna Blvd. While narrowing the lane ideally slows motorists, it also creates conflicts between bikes & motorists, especially when bikes are heading west on 55th and then turning right onto Ravenna. This is already a tight spot and should have a bike lane here (one that is at least 6 feet wide would be ideal).
- Northbound Ravenna Pl NE needs bike lanes that extend all the way to the intersection with 55th! This is how bikes get from BGT to Ravenna, so make it easy all the way!

Proposed bike trail between Ravenna bike lanes and NE 55th [6-i, no figure]

- An excellent idea, but need to be very careful to design something that can be used by bicyclists. Don't create a "bike/ped" trail—it would actually become just a pedestrian trail. If trail too inconvenient for bicyclists, too many conflicts with peds, etc., they won't use it and then motorists don't understand why bikes on the road when "there is a perfectly good trail there". Peds already have sidewalks, so should really concentrate here on improving bicycle access only (i.e., bike lanes or wide lanes).
- Key problems for bikes in this corridor are: need climbing lane up Ravenna from 55th to 16th/17th, need climbing lane up Ravenna from University to 16th/17th. Do not need bike lanes on the downhill section (especially from 17th down to 55th).